Ancient Indian Education

Ref: http://ia700300.us.archive.org/21/items/educationinancie032398mbp/educationinancie032398mbp.pdf

Period

1. Pre-historic time to 1000 B.C (consists of EARLY VEDIC AGE (C. up to 1500 B. C.), LATER VEDIC AGE (C. 1500 to 1000 B. C.) i.e. Vedic period

Key notes: It was emphasized that Gods would be friends of only those who are wise and learned. No distinction was made between boys and girls.

2. 1000 B.C. TO 200 B.C. (Upanishads, Sutras and Epics) – Leaders like Barhadrathas, Sisunagas, Nandas and Mauryas

Key notes: Most creative period of Hindu culture and literature , arts and sciences. In later years, girls education came down.

3. 200 B.C. TO 500 A.D. (Dharmasastra) -- Leaders like Sungas, Satavahanas, Vakatakas and Guptas

Key notes: Age of critical reflection and specialization. Child marriage started. Upanayana of Kshatriyas and Vaishyas came down. At a later years, organized public schools and colleges came into picture for the cultured classes.

4. 500 A.D. TO 1200 A.D. (Puranas, Digests/Nibandhas) -- Leaders Kings Harsha and Bhoja

Key notes: Reputation of an international centre of education. Age of Girl's marriage came down to 10 - 11 yrs. No upnayan for Kshatriyas and Vaishyas.

5. 1200 A.D. to 1800 A.D. (Muslim Invader period) -- Post-Vedic works were also significantly affected by destruction of temples and monasteries on a wide scale at the time of the invasions of the Mahomadens and during their subsequent long rule.

Free education to All

- Teacher: Student ratio was 1: (10 to 15)
- Education was NOT bound to Brahmans only. Kshatriya teachers of Vedic and philosophical subjects existed down the 6th century B.C.(the whole of the third book of the Rig-veda is a composition of the various members of the Kshatriya Visvamitra family). It was only in later times around 300 B.C. that religious and literary education came to be confined to the Brahmans and professional and industrial training to non-Brahmans
- Shudra were rigorously excluded from the Vedic education and rituals because The Aryan's theologians believe was that if there was the slightest mistake in the accent or the pronunciation of the Vedic Mantras, a disaster would inevitably issue and as the Vedic Sanskrit was not the mother tongue of the Shudras, it was feared that Vedic hymns would be transformed out of recognition, if they were transmitted orally in Shudra families from generation to generation.
- Girls education was mostly done at home by Father/Brother or Uncle but at some places terms like 'Upadhayayani' shows Lady teachers may probably have confined themselves to the teaching of girl students, though some may have taught boys also. women were regarded as perfectly eligible for the privilege of studying the Vedic literature and performing the sacrifices enjoined in it down to about 200 B. C. sometimes boys and girls were educated together while receiving higher education and sometimes love marriages used to take place as a consequence of it. Inter caste marriages was allowed, provided the bridegroom belonged to a higher caste. Till 500 B.C. girls education continued. After 500 B.C. special effort was made to give girls a good grounding in domestic and culinary arts and fine arts like music, dancing, painting, garland-making and household decorations.

Importance of Study

- **The Theory of Three Debts:** To accept and maintain the best traditions of thought and action of the past generations.

  1: All, he owes a debt to gods, and he can liquidate it only by learning how to perform proper scarifies and by regularly offering them. Religious traditions of the race thus preserved.

  2: He owes a debt to the rishis or savants of the bygone ages and can discharge it only by studying their works and continuing their literature and professional traditions. The rising generation was thus enabled to master and maintain the best literary and professional traditions.

  3: The debt to the ancestors, which can be repaid only by raising progeny and by imparting proper education to it. Steps were thus to take to see that the rising generation became an efficient torch-bearer of the culture and traditions of the past.

- **Recitation** and **recapitulation** therefore formed an important part in the daily routine of the student life. Sastrarthas or learned debates were constantly held in colleges where students of literature, poetics, philosophy and logic were called upon to defend their own propositions and attack those of their opponents. The training in debates made students ready-witted and developed their powers of speech. There was a daily examination of every student and no new lesson was given until the old one was thoroughly mastered. There were no annual examinations and mass promotions at fixed intervals.

Key Features

- Course duration was not fixed and even there was a flexibility to continue higher studies to the bright students. Society didn't prefer study after 25 to 30 as marriage would get postponed. Those students who could not be employed by the government used to get some monetary help to enable them to start their lives. Literacy rate was 75% but a set back after about 800 A.D.
- Intellectual freedom, individual attention to students, the monitorial system, gurukula ideal, plain living and high thinking, mass education, combination of useful and liberal education, the locating of educational institutions away from the din and dust of the city-life, etc. are inherently sound and capable of yielding excellent results even in modern times if applied with due regards to changed circumstances
- Student must beg his food both in the morning and in the evening to teach them humility and make them realize that it was due to the sympathy and help of society that he was learning the heritage of the race, and being enabled to follow a profession that would secure him a living, which consequently removed the difference between poor and rich Food and dress were to be simple but sufficient. In extreme case only shows, umbrella, cots and hair oil were allowed.

Limitation

- Secular sciences like history, economics, politics, mathematics and astronomy did not receive as much attention as theology, philosophy, ritualism and sacred law which were religious science.
- Even famous capitals and holy places like Taxila and Benares were centers of a number of famous scholars/teachers as individual institutes, but they also imparted education in their individual capacity, and did not as a rule combine to form any colleges.
- Aryabhata, Brahmagupta, Varahamihira and Bhaskaracharya knew the true causes of eclipses, but felt powerless because of the mythological explanation canonized by the Puranas.